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ABSTRACT

Using the case study approach to examine an important aspect of the news paradigm (the objectivity of the journalist), this paper examines the case of A. Kent MacDougall, a former reporter for the "Wall Street Journal" and the "Los Angeles Times" who revealed that he was a socialist and often wrote for radical publications while employed at the "Journal." The paper argues that the controversy within the journalistic community over this revelation helps shed light on unwritten paradigmatic assumptions, particularly regarding objectivity. It examines the repair process that was engaged in to handle the threats created for the paradigm by reviewing the commentary that was generated by the reporter's actions and analysing the strategies through which the paradigmatic assumptions and routines were reaffirmed and strengthened. (Thirty-five references are attached.) (RS)

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THE NEWS PARADIGM AND THE LIMITS OF OBJECTIVITY: A SOCIALIST AT THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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On the evening of March 4, 1983, Cecil Andrews set himself on fire in a deserted Alabama town square, in what he called an act of protest against unemployment. The event was recorded by a local TV news camera crew, alerted by the man who conveniently waited for them to arrive and set up. The national controversy following the event centered not on the jobless protestor, but on the behavior of the news media. Would the man have ignited himself had the camera not been present? Probably not. Should the camera crew have tried to stop the man rather than filming his efforts for 37 seconds? Yes. The story was troubling because it violated the norms of journalism. Reporters are supposed to record reality, not create it.

In their analysis of the story and the commentary it provoked, Bennett, Gressett, & Haltom (1985) observed that the story was an "anomaly," a troubling story that did not fit comfortably into journalistic routines. It presented enough features of a routine news story that it fell within what Tuchman (1978) calls the "news net." The camera crew arrived to record what they thought would be authorities subduing the man. However, when police were delayed, the "script" was so strong that the news crew proceeded anyway. Thus, in effect they triggered the event rather than responding to it. Bennett et al. (1985) note that such anomalies bring the internal logic of news gathering into sharp focus and provide an excellent opportunity to study the limits of the journalistic "paradigm." The present study examines another such anomaly to probe another aspect of the paradigm, that associated with objectivity.

In describing the practice of scientific inquiry, Thomas Kuhn (1962, p. 23) treated as central the notion of paradigm, as "an accepted model or pattern." A model helps guide those engaged in complex information producing tasks. While focusing attention on some problems, it necessarily excludes from study other questions that cannot be as easily stated using the tools supplied by the paradigm. Like scientists, journalists also rely on a paradigm to make sense of the world. The paradigm remains of value so long as it provides a useful practical guide and these practitioners share its underlying assumptions. Bennett et al. (1985, p. 55) note that like all paradigms, the news model faces the problem of "anomalous or troublesome cases that fall partly within the defining logic of the paradigm, yet fail to conform to other defining characteristics of the paradigm."

These cases threaten the paradigm by calling into question its limitations and biases, and, therefore, must be "repaired." They argue that the journalistic community repaired the Andrews case by retrospectively defining the core event as un-newsworthy, by introducing official sources as the story developed, and by blaming the error on methodological error rather than any blind spots in the professional guidelines. Bennett et al. note that "no single anomalous case can reveal the

logic of an entire paradigm" (p. 56), but by using a series of distinct cases a more complete understanding can be developed.

This study uses this case approach to examine an important aspect of the news paradigm, the objectivity of the journalist. Unlike the analysis by Bennett et al. this case involves not a specific story, but an individual reporter. A former reporter for the Wall Street Journal and the Los Angeles Times, A. Kent MacDougall, recently revealed that he was a socialist, and often wrote for radical publications while employed at the Journal. The controversy within the journalistic community over his revelations helps shed light on unwritten paradigmatic assumptions, particularly regarding objectivity. As will be shown, a repair process was engaged to handle the threats created for the paradigm. I will review the commentary that was generated by the reporter's actions, particularly from within the profession, and how the paradigmatic assumptions and routines were reaffirmed and strengthened. By examining the case of A. Kent MacDougall, one can probe the limits and nature of the paradigm by observing the steps taken to address the anomaly. If he violated a central component of the news paradigm, we should find evidence of paradigm maintenance in attempts to "repair" his apparent violation of those rules and normalize the case.

BACKGROUND: PARADIGMS AND REPAIR

Paradigms

By providing a model, a paradigm exerts a powerful influence on our views of the world, by restricting the range of questions deemed appropriate for study. As Kuhn (1962) notes, paradigms provide examples rather than explicit rules. Thus, one learns the paradigm by engaging in the discipline rather than learning a set of rules. This means that the defining features of paradigms are not necessarily written down and available for study, nor are practitioners necessarily able to articulate complete rationalizations of them. This does not prevent the paradigm from guiding research, however. Thus, in lieu of explicit rules, the routines that practitioners engage in give us valuable clues about the contours of the guiding paradigm.

The journalistic paradigm defines what becomes part of our second-hand reality received through the news media, and is every bit as important as scientific paradigms. Both science and journalism are empirical information gathering activities, both have developed learnable routines for their practitioners. Both scientists and journalists are presumed to be dispassionate observers of the world, guided primarily by their observations. Scientists are perhaps given a broader mission to explain the

physical world, while journalists are asked to describe it. Unlike physical scientists, journalists observe phenomena that often fight back, disputing the way they are described, and often even setting the rules for their observation. Scientists have theories to guide them, while journalists are supposed to be guided by the reality of events.

In the absence of well-defined theoretical guideposts, the news paradigm relies more heavily than science on routines as a basis and justification for descriptions of reality. Tuchman (1972), for example, notes that these "routine practices may be seen as a strategic ritual protecting newspapermen from the risks of their trade," including "such continual pressures as deadlines, possible libel suits, and anticipated reprimands of superiors." A violation of routines, then, becomes a threat to the news paradigm itself. Routines may be invoked as a defense of paradigm violation, particularly by those within the profession. Indeed, we should expect it to be invoked as the defense of last resort.[1]

Gans (1979, p. 183) argues that like the scientific method, journalistic method is validated by consensus. The consensual nature of newsgathering supports the notion that there is a guiding news paradigm. The mainstream press is particularly single-minded in its shared values and assumptions (see, e.g., Reese & Danielian, 1989). Lacking an objective standard for evaluating what are often highly ambiguous situations, it is important to journalists that they agree among themselves. As Sigal (1973, p. 180-181) found,

> "Newsmaking is a consensual process. The forming of consensus takes place within a context of shared values--conventions about news as well as conceptions of the newsman's role... So long as newsmen follow the same routines, espousing the same professional values and using each other as their standards of comparison, newsmaking will tend to be insular and self-reinforcing. But that insularity is precisely what newsmen need. It provides them with a modicum of certitude that enables them to act in an otherwise uncertain environment."

As the professionalization of news work has increased, the paradigm has perhaps grown more entrenched, but less obvious.[2]

Paradigms and hegemony

The news media play an essential function in maintaining the authority of the political system. This hegemonic control

may be defined as the "systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 253). By not appearing openly coercive, this control is all the more effective. The media "certify the limits within which all competing definitions of reality will contend (p. 254)." They do this largely by accepting the frames imposed on events by officials, and by marginalizing and de-legitimating voices that fall outside the dominant elite circles. By perpetuating as common-sensical notions of who ought to be treated as authoritative, these routines help the system maintain control without sacrificing legitimacy.

As a system tightly inter-locked at the top levels with other powerful institutions, the news media have an interest in preserving the larger liberal, capitalist system and serve an important function by helping maintain the boundaries of acceptable political discourse. This is despite the fact that the stated goal of journalism is to depict reality. The media establish what is normal and what is deviant based on how they portray people and ideas. Journalists may come into frequent conflict with government and business, but this antagonism is primarily reformist in nature and does not threaten the underlying hegemonic principles (e.g., Dreier, 1982; Parenti, 1978).

The journalistic paradigm, therefore, must be consistent with and help reinforce the dominant social ideology. As self-perceived professional truth-tellers and objective coverers of events, journalists naturally resist being manipulated overtly by sources or their own managers. The paradigm provides them with enough latitude to satisfy their professional objectives, while not treading on core societal values. By relying heavily on official statements made through routine channels (Sigal, 1973), journalists give these sources the power, by default, to frame much of their reality. From this arrangement, the media benefit by solving a key problem: how to define what news is? (Bennett et al, 1985). News is what authorities and other institutional elites say it is. Official and corporate sources make themselves attractive to journalists by "subsidizing" the media's cost of gathering information about them (Gandy, 1982). By making it easier, through predictable and pre-arranged packaged pronouncements, to be covered they can crowd out less strategically advantaged voices. The media are thus assured of efficient channels through which to get an acceptable raw information product.

The news paradigm overlays this state of affairs, justifying it with its own logic. A key paradigm feature in this regard is

the notion of objectivity. Objectivity has been called "the emblem" of American journalism (Schudson, 1978, p. 9). In more recent years, journalists have found it increasingly hard to maintain that they are wholly "objective," and have fallen back on more defensible standards, like "accuracy," "balance," and "fairness." Even if the word has become somewhat outdated, the media act as though it weren't, and the underlying principle of reporter detachment remain firmly entrenched. As Hackett (1984, p. 251) observes, the opposite of objectivity is bias, and conventional evaluations of news bias rest on important assumptions: among them that (1) "news can and ought to be objective, balanced and a reflection of social reality" and that (2) "the political attitudes of journalists or editorial decision-makers are a major determinant of news bias."

These assumptions are eminently compatible with hegemonic requirements. Thus, journalists are being "objective" when they let prominent sources dictate the news, while using their own expertise to draw conclusions is considered biased. The press gave Ronald Reagan largely uncritical press during his first term, because no opposing elites were able to mount an effective challenge and thus make themselves available as oppositional media voices (Hertsgaard, 1988). Giving serious attention to non-official sources is discouraged as "un-newsworthy." This model is compatible with the dominant ideology. By accepting valueless reporting as the norm, the media accept the boundaries, values, and ideological "rules of the game" established and interpreted by elite sources. When journalists express values openly, particularly at the boundaries as did MacDougall, it threatens the paradigm. Normally, radical writers can be dismissed as falling clearly outside the mainstream paradigm. MacDougall, however, presented the problematic feature of already having worked in the mainstream press for 20 years.

The editing process is particularly compatible with hegemonic requirements. Editors rise to their positions only after fully internalizing the norms of the journalistic paradigm (e.g., Breed, 1955). Although reporters are presumably in closer contact with reality, editors are considered less apt to succumb to bias than reporters, who may get "wrapped up" in a story and be blinded to the "big picture." High ranking editors, particularly at major papers, are also more directly in touch with the values of official and other elite sources, and are reluctant to break from these boundaries. Experiences by reporters during the Vietnam war provides an excellent example of this process. In the early 1960s David Halberstam was an extremely knowledgeable reporter on the scene in Vietnam, yet he often had difficulty getting his state-side editors to accept his pessimistic version of the war. The editors had received a

more optimistic version from Pentagon and administration officials and were reluctant to contradict it (Sheehan, 1988).

Because the biased communicator is assumed to be the chief barrier to wholly objective reporting of "the facts," journalists operating within the news paradigm do not find strongly-held values to be occupationally useful. Gans (1979) found few journalists with conscious values, finding that the national media attracted people who kept their values to themselves. He did find those at Time and Newsweek who were identified as house radicals and house conservatives. These were the rarities, however, and served primarily to identify boundary markers and help the other journalists feel free of ideology. Interestingly, the house radicals eventually tired of political differences and quit, while the conservatives remained (p. 193-194).

From his own experience, MacDougall noted that most left journalists have found mainstream journalism uncomfortable, citing Chomsky's observation that he knows of no socialists in the strikingly uniform media (MacDougall, 1988a, p.15). MacDougall also noted the reaction of Los Angeles Times publisher Otis Chandler when asked in 1977 about Times staffer Robert Scheer, former editor of the leftist publication Ramparts: "A radical? If that were true he wouldn't be here" (MacDougall, 1988b, p. 12).

Of course, journalists hold many values that aren't obvious because they are safely within the range of core societal values. Sources notice journalists values only when markedly different from their own. MacDougall (1988a), for example, said that sources he spoke with while at the Wall Street Journal showed greater candor because they assumed he was as soft on business as the writers for the editorial pages. Referring to the Columbia University School of Journalism, for example, MacDougall noted that this "trade school" gives reporters the mind set needed to thrive in the mainstream press, which during the 1950s included vigorous anti-communism (in addition to value-less reporting) (1988a, p. 16).

Anomalies and evidence of repair

The case of A. Kent MacDougall can be treated as an anomaly in need of repair, although with some important differences from a conventional "story." Unlike the Andrews anomaly, repair work cannot be traced over time as different facts and frames are introduced into a story. The MacDougall case does not present a specific story, but rather an individual, his statements about what he did, and the resulting commentary. This material is

examined for evidence of paradigm violation and repair. The body of work produced by MacDougall is examined only indirectly through references to it by him and others. The objectivity of his stories is less at issue than the perceptions by the journalistic community of paradigm violations. As in the Andrews case, I look for references to existing standards of journalistic practice as a strategy of normalization.

First, I look for evidence that the MacDougall case represents an anomaly by looking for evidence of its ambiguity. If the case is problematic for the paradigm, journalists should have difficulty coming to grips with it. Given its problematic character, repair work should be observable as the paradigm undergoes defense and reaffirmation. Because of the centrality of routines to the news paradigm, I expect repair work within the media to resort to them as a primary way of normalizing the anomaly.

THE CASE OF A. KENT MACDOUGALL

Background

A. Kent MacDougall is now on the faculty at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. Before that he spent 10 years at the Wall Street Journal followed by another 10 year stint at the Los Angeles Times. His memoirs "Boring from within the bourgeois press," published in the socialist Monthly Review, set off a storm of controversy in journalistic circles. In the article, he said he had written under an alias for radical publications while at the Wall Street Journal, and had selected story topics based on his radical beliefs. For example, at the Wall Street Journal he profiled radical economists, historians, and I.F. Stone; at the Los Angeles Times he profiled other radical economists and the left-leaning magazine Mother Jones.

The Wall Street Journal quickly issued a response, and this was followed by elsewhere by a handful of articles and editorials. These were obtained through a complete search of virtually all data-base accessible publications using DIALOG, Nexis, and VuText[3] to scan full-text for any mentions of MacDougall. The Wall Street Journal was examined separately. I am reasonably confident of having located all the pertinent materials to date.

The case as problematic for the paradigm

Did a paradigm violation occur in the case of MacDougall? The overt violation appeared to center on the uneasy

relationship between reporter values and objectivity. The Wall Street Journal issued the most vociferous reaction through its corporate relations department, although declining to mention MacDougall by name or publish a story or editorial in the paper itself.

> "We are offended and outraged that a former Wall Street Journal reporter now claims he tried to pursue a hidden ideological agenda within the pages of the Journal.
>
> However, this reporter left the Journal more than 15 years ago and his importance at the Journal or in journalism seems somewhat greater in his own mind these days than it was in fact.
>
> We have reviewed articles he wrote while at the Journal and we believe our editing process succeeded in making sure that what appeared in print under his byline met Journal standards of accuracy, newsworthiness and fairness.
>
> Finally, we find it bizarre and troubling that any man who brags of having sought to push a personal political agenda on unsuspecting editors and readers should be teaching journalism at a respected university" (Austin, 1989).

I also obtained a form letter from the Wall Street Journal sent to those complaining about the matter, which does name MacDougall and makes the same points, referring in the opening paragraph to a "hidden ideological agenda" (letter to the author, March 29, 1989). A business journalism insider newsletter framed the issue in much the same way saying it strikes at perhaps the most sensitive nerve: journalistic credibility; how vulnerable is a paper to reporters manipulating the news in pursuing their own personal agenda? (Recent, 1989).

The violation may also be seen in problems that the journalism community had in dealing effectively with the case. The case generated less publicity than might be expected given the way journalism insiders described it. For example, David Shaw in the Los Angeles Times said MacDougall's story has "sparked a contretemps in the mainstream journalistic community" (Shaw, 1989, p. 1). An insider newsletter for business journalists, TJFR: The Financial Journalist & Reporter, noted that the incident has sparked heated debate in journalistic circles (Recent, 1989, p. 1). An article in the newspaper trade publication, Editor and Publisher, said MacDougall had "created a media furor with his revelations" (Stein, 1989, p. 10). It's unclear why this "furor" did not yield more printed coverage, except in a few industry insider publications. Certainly, the

case did not receive the attention given the "man on fire" incident discussed earlier, nor was it mentioned in the most central arbiter of newsworthiness, The New York Times, as was the Andrews case. Perhaps, left-liberals in the newsroom are not considered that unusual by the mainstream press or the public. Perhaps, the journalism community was uncertain how to deal with the anomaly, or, like a spokesperson at the Los Angeles Times said in refusing to give an official statement, they were reluctant to give ex-employees more credibility than warranted (Recent, p. 8). Or perhaps, it was uncomfortable to expose a paradigm failure to the public, beyond the industry press (Time was the only national mass publication carrying a story).

Nevertheless, the case did present ample overt evidence of being problematic. It was said to provide a rare glimpse of the fuzzy lines between right and wrong in journalism, where there is often no rule book or final arbiter (Recent, 1989, p. 1). The same article noted that journalists like to present a united front to the outside world but internally there is not that degree of unanimity in beliefs and behavior (p. 1). MacDougall himself acknowledged the ambiguous nature of the paradigm and used the uneasy relationship between routines and values to his advantage. He learned that "editors would support a reporter against charges by a news source, special-interest group, or reader that the reporter's story was biased or had some other major defect as long as the reporter had gotten all the minor facts right" (MacDougall, 1988a, p. 19).

Knowing that reporters must speak through sources, he said, "I made sure to seek out experts whose opinions I knew in advance would support my thesis...Conversely, I sought out mainstream authorities to confer recognition and respectability on radical views I sought to popularize" (MacDougall, 1988a, p. 23). He paid his dues by cranking out routine business stories, playing within the established rules of the Wall Street Journal. Thus, he was given latitude to pick feature topics and report in depth. His writing followed enough attributes of the paradigm to be acceptable, although not without the occasional angry audience response: "Are you a communist?" said one reader in reaction to his Mother Jones piece (MacDougall, 1988b, p. 14). A forestry industry group, critical of his series for the Los Angeles Times on "The Vanishing Forests," suggested he was fostering an "anti-private-enterprise view" (Benneth, 1989).

MacDougall said his stories contained enough "significance, controversy, color and surprise to satisfy commercial journalistic standards for relevance and readability," and that his "calm, matter-of-fact, non-polemical tone fit the formula" (MacDougall, 1988a, p. 24). He said the Los Angeles Times

permitted wide latitude to reporters, valuing diversity as ar attention getter, as long as the reporter "adheres to the readily assimilated professional code of objectivity and impartiality and doesn't violate canons against being shrill and propagandistic or stating a personal opinion" (MacDougall, 1988b, p. 13). An editorial writer felt MacDougall had "got away with" slanting, by being factually accurate and avoiding leftist clique's (Morris, 1989).

The ambiguity of the case is also revealed through editor reactions to MacDougall's work at the time. At the Los Angeles Times one editor liked a series on social inequality enough to nominate it for a Pulitzer prize, saying MacDougall had backed up his research with "interviews with scores of economists, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists," while the page one feature editor downplayed the series, declining to run it on consecutive days, as was the custom, and also declining to run one of the four stories on page one (MacDougall, 1988b).

The notion that MacDougall fell outside the boundaries maintained by the news paradigm is supported by the language used to describe him. Throughout the MacDougall case, the rhetorical content is filled with terms that set limits. MacDougall himself said, "What I was--and wasn't--able to report in two of the nation's most enlightened dailies indicates the limits within which socially conscious journalists can practice their craft in mainstream media" (MacDougall, 1988a, p. 14). His success he said suggests the "limits of the permissible are wider than many radicals would suppose" (MacDougall, 1988a, p. 15) (but perhaps not as wide as they might like). He admitted that he had been "pushing against the limits set by the Wall Street Journal's standardized news formula" (MacDougall, 1988a, p. 24).

The predictable attack from the conservatives zeroed in on this idea of violated boundaries. Kincaid (1989, p. 7), for example, noted that Accuracy In Media had started a letter writing campaign to media heads, asking, for example, if NBC "has adequate safeguards against similar abuses by other media moles." Kincaid (1988, p. 4) said it raised concern "about the ability of Marxist agents to penetrate the mainstream media," claiming that it will make it harder for the Wall Street Journal to defend itself against charges of liberal bias. Editorial writers referred to MacDougall's "subterranean antics" (Cheshire, 1989) as a "clandestine marxist" (Morris, 1989). MacDougall himself entitled his Monthly Review piece, "Boring from Within..."

The normalization process

I have argued that the news paradigm helps justify the maintenance of acceptable political boundaries. Assuming these radical socialist values expressed by MacDougall fall outside these boundaries (and this should be apparent from the rhetorical descriptions and the known range of hegemonic acceptability), then repair work would be in order. Given that the stories themselves written by MacDougall were beyond "repair," several post hoc repair strategies are possible: (1) disengage and distance these threatening values from the reporter's work, (2) reassert the ability of journalistic routines to prevent threatening values from "distorting" the news, and (3) marginalize the man and his message, making both appear ineffective. As Bennett et al. (1985) suggested the press takes an active role in the normalization process. Indeed, the press itself carried out the repair work without any help from other institutions. And to a large extent MacDougall himself engaged in this normalization process.

Disengaging values: In response to the attack on him, MacDougall has mounted a vigorous defense, reaffirming the distinction between values and his professional work, contending that he was "a journalist first and a radical second throughout my career...I stuck to accepted standards of newsworthiness, accuracy and fairness" (Shaw, 1989, p. 15), adding that his remarks were misconstrued. He makes it a point to assert that he keeps ideology out of the classroom at Berkeley, choosing to train aspiring journalists in the routines. He says he does not say a word critical of business in class (as it's all a student can do to get the facts right) (Recent, 1989, p. 9). MacDougall doesn't completely do away with values, however. He maintains that his "emergence from the ideological closet" is serving a useful purpose of encouraging the debate over whether journalists having unpopular views interferes with their jobs. He claims it did not in his case, but rather made him a better reporter (e.g., MacDougall, 1989b).

Others also reaffirmed the distinction between values and reporting (albeit uneasily), claiming that reporters should not seek to promote their own agenda. An unsigned editorial in the Columbia Journalism Review sums up this disengagement repair, asking: Is there a place for socialist reporters in the capitalist media? It contends that a reporter should "be judged not on the basis of his political beliefs but by the integrity of his work," maintaining that his work did have integrity (Comment, 1989, p. 16). However, values slip back in as the article goes on to argue that mainstream journalists out not to have only one set of mainstream values, supporting MacDougall's contention that

a variety of perspectives can benefit journalism (Comment, 1989, p. 17). Berkeley dean, Tom Goldstein, a former Wall Street Journal reporter praised MacDougall's teaching saying, "We have no ideological litmus test at this school" (Shaw, 1989, p. 16), implying that political values are kept out of the teaching process.

The repair work was not completely successful using the disengagement approach. The counter-paradigmatic, yet appealing, notion of free expression of diverse opinion keeps intruding. One editorial writer, produced a contradictory argument, by criticizing MacDougall for "promoting radical causes," yet praising MacDougall's socialist father, Curtis MacDougall for being outspoken with his beliefs. He concluded that it's wrong when a man admits his "professional life was a masquerade and is allowed to teach others the craft" (Cheshire, 1989). Yet, how can it be termed a masquerade if values are ideally to be kept out of reporting? (Ironically, this apparently conservative editorialist and leftist Alexander Cockburn made the same argument--that MacDougall should have promoted his views forthrightly). Wall Street Journal and Los Angeles Times editors also said they valued diversity. Frederick Taylor, Journal managing editor during MacDougall's last two years there, accepted that MacDougall would choose some stories over others because of his views, as would others with more conservative values (Shaw, 1989, p. 16).

Reasserting journalistic routines: The primary defense within the journalistic community was to reaffirm the ability of the routines to handle the anomaly. The editing routine was reaffirmed in most cases by asserting that it had worked to perfection, that the system was successful in wringing any bias out of the news. (Indeed, all MacDougall's stories at the Wall Street Journal were heavily edited.) The consensus was not perfect, however. At the Wall Street Journal, their statement summed it up: "We believe our editing process succeeded..." (Austin, 1989). If that was true, it is unclear why they were so upset.

The common reaction among editors responding to the story was that bias would have been dealt with in the editing process. Los Angeles Times editor at the time, John Lawrence, explicitly stated that he edited out any hints of MacDougall's bias (Shaw, 1989, p. 16). Lawrence expressed ambivalent statements about MacDougall's reporting in another article, saying that "Being a Marxist doesn't necessarily have to detract from his journalistic integrity. Every reporter comes to a story with some level of bias. The question is: Are they capable of rising above that bias to write a fair story?" Lawrence concluded that MacDougall

was capable, and went on to support his contention that radicals might make better journalists by being more objective (Recent, p. 8). And yet, he said he would not have allowed him to write about a Marxist economist if he knew he was "as strong a proponent...as he now claims to have been" (Shaw, 1989, p. 16). This uneasiness suggests that Lawrence thought reporters able to rise above their bias, but better not to tempt them.

MacDougall received general support from his former editors. Of course, they could hardly do otherwise in the process of reaffirming the editing process. They were the ones, after all, who approved his stories. Michael Gartner, now head of NBC News, edited MacDougall at the Wall Street Journal. He said he assumed that MacDougall was liberal but that it didn't affect his reporting: "I judge journalists by one thing--whether they are fair, thorough and accurate" (Shaw, 1989, p. 15). Gartner agreed that the strict Wall Street Journal editing process would have filtered out any bias before it got into print (Recent, p. 8). Editor William F. Thomas, editor of the Los Angeles Times until January 1st of this year, affirmed the ability of a reporter to keep values separate from professional duties. He said he knew MacDougall was left of center, but praised him, saying he "met every journalistic standard. He was a professional" (Shaw, 1989, p. 15).

In an editorial, Donald Morris (1989) also reaffirmed the effectiveness of the editing process, saying that editors would simply spike or edit out bias, or not hire reporters prone to such slanting in the first place (note the emphasis on recruitment in maintaining the paradigm). In addition, Morris claimed slanting a story is hard to do, given the simple factual nature of most stories (although this avoids the issue of selectivity). In short, he seems to conclude "the system worked." Time magazine's article concluded with an uneasy tension between bias and diversity. The editing process would have prevented MacDougall from "pursuing any hidden agenda," yet it noted editor Gartner's belief that the added diversity of having a socialist on the staff benefited readers (Zuckerman, 1989, p. 58).

Minimizing man and message: The third repair technique used in neutralizing the threat to the paradigm was to minimize MacDougall and his message, including questioning his role in carrying on the paradigm through his teaching function. The Wall Street Journal called it "bizarre and troubling that any man who brags of having sought to push a personal political agenda on unsuspecting editors and readers should be teaching journalism at a respected university" (Austin, 1989). An editorial quoted an anonymous Los Angeles Times editor: "If he slipped any

messages through, they were so oblique that nobody got it"; Morrison (1989) concluded that there are easier ways to get messages across than being a closet marxist.

Attempts were made to marginalize MacDougall, and de-emphasize his contribution, by referring to him in derogatory terms.[4] Los Angeles Times editor Tim Rutten, explained "You know, there's something concocted about this. I catch the odor of rationalization for personal dissatisfaction with his life...I don't find any politics in this man's pieces" (quoted in Cockburn, 1989). Frederick Taylor, Journal editor, also took this tack (having also supported the diversity value), saying he's "madder than hell. I think it is gutless of him to confess now. He's like a lot of liberals. They want their cake and to eat it too. Why didn't he say so up front if he believes it so strongly?" (Recent, 1989, p. 8). Taylor said he would not have fired MacDougall for being a socialist but would have had he know of his extracurricular writing. He said he is especially upset about defending him against conservative attack, and now finding he was a leftist after all (Recent, 1989, p. 9.). The Wall Street Journal does not appear to have a firm policy on writing for outside publications while on the payroll (many writers are frequent publishers), although I was told by a corporate relations spokesperson (March 29, 1989) that they would not want it to reflect unfavorably on the paper.

Three editorialists labelled MacDougall a "Marxist" (Cheshire, 1989; McCarthy, 1989; Morris, 1989), a term not used by MacDougall in describing himself and one with more negative connotations than socialist. One of these writers found it disturbing that MacDougall "abused that position of trust," adding that he not only "insinuated his flaky politics into news stories" but unethically contributed to radical publications under a nom de plume. The same writer disparaged MacDougall's father, describing the way he arrived at an editorial writers conference, "shambling and snarling along, attended by a handful of admirers" (Cheshire, 1989). The article in the Time, the only one running in a mass circulation national publication, featured a picture of Karl Marx with the caption "his favorite newsman." (MacDougall had said Marx was his favorite journalist in his two-piece Monthly Review contribution, the only mention in the 27 pages). In addition, many articles characterized MacDougall as "back-pedalling," thus, framing his responses as a repudiation of his actions.

DISCUSSION

I have presented a preliminary look at a case of repairing the news paradigm. Although the lack of greater commentary on

the MacDougall incident restricted the materials available for analysis, that itself may show the difficulty that the mainstream press had in dealing with the issue. However, repair work can still be discerned. The case clearly presented an anomaly for the paradigm, and required repair. This repair was hampered given that MacDougall's anomalous stories had been written long ago and could not be spiked or re-edited.

Like Bennett et al. (1985), the repair work relied largely on the assertion that there are readily available professional routines that can be relied on to guard against anomalies. In the "man on fire" case, reporters were said to have committed a methodological error by failing to follow a central tenet of journalism that reporters don't make the news. In the MacDougall case, the editing process was found to have worked to perfection. In all, three strategies appear to have been followed: (1) disengaging values from content, (2) reaffirming journalistic routines, especially the editing process, and (3) marginalizing and minimizing the man and the effectiveness of his message.

By analyzing this repair work we can better understand the limits of the news paradigm. Here, objectivity was found to be an especially important paradigmatic feature, and the journalistic community took an active role its repair. In particular, this process helps us understand how the paradigm reinforces and justifies hegemonic boundaries. By crossing the lines of hegemonic acceptability, the MacDougall case required reaffirmation of the paradigm. It's hard to imagine that discovering a conservative at the Wall Street Journal would have caused such a rush to defend journalistic routines.

Different people within the media engaged in different kinds of repair work. Certainly, MacDougall's immediate editors had less problem with his work than did the Journal's top editor, Taylor, and its corporate office. These higher levels in the media system are more concerned with protecting the paradigm at the institutional level. And editor's at the lower echelon could not easily attack MacDougall's stories, given that they personall=y approved them. Future studies may want to probe further the different forms of paradigm repair performed at different levels of media systems.

The MacDougall case prompted more attack from the right than from the left, which is not surprising given his value system. In addition, a loud complaint was heard from the Wall Street Journal itself. Perhaps, as MacDougall suggested, the Journal wanted to avoid offending its conservative subscriber base (Recent, 1989, p. 9). Clearly, the paradigm is showing signs of wear on its right flank, judging from the frequency of attacks

from conservatives, and may have to be shored up there in particular. Certainly, mainstream journalism gives more attention to attacks from the right than from the left.

The left stance finds value in being apart from "the system" while the right finds journalists outside the "system" to be necessarily inimicable to it. In both cases, the usually invisible "system" comes into view. An Accuracy In Media Report (quoted in Comment, 1989, p. 16) noted that the MacDougall case "explodes the myth that our media have effective safeguards to screen out propaganda hostile to our country and our system." On the other hand, MacDougall found support in a Post editorial: Coleman McCarthy (1989) criticized writers and reporters for often being glorified dictationists, supporting MacDougall's advocation that journalists improve their vantage point by stepping outside system.

Conservative press critics show that they recognize more than media insiders that story selection is a form of bias. The growing right-wing press criticism industry (Accuracy in Media, MediaWatch, etc.) has at least called into question the prevailing news paradigm, pointing out the power of selectivity as a way of bypassing the filters of objectifying routines. Kincaid (1989, p. 7), for example, quotes Joe Farah, editor of "Between the Lines," who notes that many left journalists "got into the media...because they saw it as a way of changing the world. And you can do that by choosing to write certain stories." Conservative critics must elevate the power of the individual journalist over the "objectifying" structural routines, or else render moot their frequent charge that journalists are too liberal.

The case also points out the dilemma faced by journalists on the left. On one hand, they can speak out forthrightly as Alexander Cockburn recommends, and be relegated to small circulation publications like The Nation, where their impact is minimal. On the other hand, they can choose mainstream journalism and reach a wider audience. There though they will be frustrated and constrained by the mainstream news paradigm, and perhaps criticized for "selling out," or, as MacDougall was, for "masquerading." For example, MacDougall's editor made him introduce a conservative spokesperson to balance a story about inequality: "Even though I knew he was wrong, I quoted Gilder as saying that the growing gap between rich and poor was "almost entirely demographic..." (MacDougall, 1989b, p. 18). Another example of paradigmatic limits is seen in MacDougall's editor who allowed him to mention Marx, but only if introduced in a humorous way. He agreed, to get the story in print (MacDougall, 1988b, p. 17).

Because MacDougall came under strongest attack from the right, he perhaps fell back most strongly on a paradigmatic defense: that he followed the guidelines of "accuracy, fairness and newsworthiness."[5] He made another important point in his defense, however, that deserves to be emphasized. He maintains that radical journalists may be even more objective than "bourgeois" journalists, who are often not conscious of the hidden presuppositions that they bring to their reporting on capitalist institutions (MacDougall, 1988b, p. 22). Radical journalists, by taking the "system" itself as problematic may be better equipped to address the structural causes for social ills. The Columbia Journalism Review article supported this claim that socialist perspectives can contribute to robust journalism, hearkening back to the muckraking socialist journalists at the turn of the century who called the country's attention to the Beef Trust, child labor, and urban poverty (Comment, 1989). Perhaps by expanding the news paradigm to support this kind of reporting, journalism can respond a common complaint: that it is too focused on the details and not enough on meaningful context.

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NOTES

1. A Master's student under my direction has produced two interesting analyses using this paradigmatic repair approach. He examined coverage of the Gary Hart-Donna Rice affair and the Pennsylvania state treasurer, R. Budd Dwyer, who shot himself at a news conference (Forrest, 1989).

2. The news paradigm has been remarkably resilient over the years. During the 1960s the left mounted an attack with some success, particularly following the discrepancies noted between the reality of social upheavals (Vietnam, campus unrest, civil rights marches) and mainstream press coverage of them. More recently, the right has seized the momentum and has been more successful in keeping the media on the defensive.

3. The author thanks Gale Wiley of UT-Austin for help with accessing the VuText database.

4. Even a seemingly natural ally, leftist op-ed contributor at the Journal Alexander Cockburn, got into the act. Cockburn, whom ironically MacDougall praised as a "sophisticated, stylish leftist critic" (MacDougall, 1988b, p. 23), attacked MacDougall for not making his views forthrightly. He minimized MacDougall in one such column using phrases like: "A man called Kent MacDougall," "revealed with schoolboyish glee," later calling him "Walter Mittyish."

5. In a telephone interview with the author, MacDougall resisted the notion that his story would make a good case study on objectivity because he had not violated any of the rules (March 21, 1989).